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Linkage, leverage and organisational power: Algeria and the Maghreb Spring

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Abstract

As Abdelaziz Bouteflika begins his fourth term as Algeria's president, questions persist over his regime's survival. Why has it endured while those of Tunisia's Ben Ali and Libya's Qaddafi have not? What has Bouteflika done differently? What sets Algeria apart? The aim of this paper is to address these questions by using Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way's (2010) celebrated model for explaining democratisation to chart and examine Algeria's links to European and North American countries, the amount of leverage Western governments have over Algiers, and the Bouteflika regime's organisational strength. The paper concludes that Europe and North America have little appetite and only limited means to press Algeria to democratise and that the regime possesses strong coercive capabilities. Together, these factors have helped ensure Bouteflika's survival.

Keywords: Algeria; Maghreb; Arab Spring; Levitsky and Way; Competitive Authoritarian; Democratisation; Linkage; Leverage; Organisational Power

1. Introduction

More than any other ballot in Algeria's recent history, the 2014 presidential election was marked by genuine doubt. Staged against the backdrops of the Maghreb Spring and Abdelaziz Bouteflika's continued ill health (Martín 2013, p. 69), uncertainty and speculation abounded over what might happen.[1] Would this be the moment when the country finally succumbed to the tide of change that had already swept neighbouring Tunisia, Libya and Egypt? Could the military backed regime engineer an unprecedented fourth election victory for a candidate who was so obviously unwell? Would Bouteflika survive the rigours of the election campaign? Did

[1] The term Maghreb Spring refers to the wide range of events, demands, initiatives and actors that together comprise the Arab Awakening as it manifests itself in Northwest Africa.

his candidacy indicate the regime's lack of imagination and options, and herald its possible demise? Might the army's iron grip on the political system finally be loosening?

In the end, many of these doubts were swept away by Bouteflika's emphatic victory.[2] News of his triumph did not spark any great outpourings of discontent or disbelief. There was no march on the capital. Government buildings were not attacked and occupied. Boroughs and districts that had voted against him did not rebel. The regime prevailed and, in so doing, confirmed both its strength and capacity to endure. For in a climate of regional political upheaval in which voters were no longer afraid to demand and agitate for change, it had successfully orchestrated the re-election of a candidate who was 77 years old, had held a senior political post for long periods since independence,[3] had already been in office for one and a half decades, and was so ill he could barely stand.

The removal of these doubts, for a little while at least, have in turn raised pressing questions about the country's democratic process, the ongoing vigour of the Maghreb Spring and the ability of democratisation scholars to explain and anticipate the development of political systems. Why has Algeria not gone the way of Tunisia and Libya despite having so much in common with them? Do the subdued domestic and international reactions to the election mark the ebbing of the Spring tide? And how do democratisation scholars account for Algeria's difference? The aim of this paper is to address these questions by drawing on Levitsky and Way's (2010) dimensions of linkage, leverage and organisational power to explain the survival of President Bouteflika's regime.

In so doing, the paper makes three valuable and original contributions. To begin with, it is the first to use Levitsky and Way's dimensions to structure an analysis of Algeria's recent political development. This unique approach leads it to place special emphasis on Algeria's changed relationship with Europe and North America, and ways in which President Bouteflika exercises greater control over his country's coercive capabilities than did either Ben Ali or Gadhafi. To be clear, the paper makes no claim as to the originality of the information it includes, only to the way this information is organised and the factors it focuses on. This approach is consistent with that adopted by Levitsky and Way in their 2010 book as they also

[2] Bouteflika won over 80% of the votes cast (Markey and Chikhi 2014, p. 1).
[3] After serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1963 to 1978, Bouteflika was one of the frontrunners to succeed President Houari Boumedienne when he died in December 1978. Then in 1989, after spending six years in self-imposed exile to avoid corruption charges, Bouteflika re-joined the ruling National Liberation Front's (Front de Libération Nationale, FLN) Central Committee before being elected president in April 1999 (Lowi 2009, p. 129).

relied upon existing studies of each of their cases. By using these dimensions to structure its examination, the paper lays the organisational groundwork for Algeria's systematic comparison with its neighbours. The paper does not attempt this comparison itself.

Second, by seeking to explain Algeria's recent political experiences, the paper addresses the shortfall of studies into the country during this critical period. Post-independence Algeria has often struggled to command the same level of scholarly attention as its Maghreb neighbours. And this comparative neglect has been particularly pronounced over the last few years because of the heightened dramas elsewhere. Perhaps inevitably, the scholarly eye has been drawn to the spectacular and significant developments that have taken place in Tunisia and Libya. The intense and widespread protests that quickly drove Ben Ali to flee, and the brutal civil war that fractured Libya and led to Gadhafi's death have invited more urgent investigation than Algeria's more limited and less effective demonstrations (Layachi 2014, p. 136). By exploring what has happened in Algeria, the paper casts new light on the Maghreb Spring.

And third, the paper extends the application and broadens the applicability of Levitsky and Way's model. The paper is the first to use their dimensions of linkage, leverage and organisational power to examine Algeria's recent political development. In so doing, it not only extends their model to a group of countries (the Maghreb) that defy convenient categorisation as African, Middle Eastern or European and are, therefore, only imperfectly covered by existing analyses of cases from each of these regions,[4] but it also confirms the model's utility in explaining democratisation in places where the military holds tutelary power. For when selecting the case studies for their 2010 book, Levitsky and Way purposefully excluded 'other types of hybrid (or "partly free") regime[]' including those 'in which top executive positions are filled via elections but the authority of elected governments is seriously constrained by the military or other nonelected bodies' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 32). They did so on the grounds that 'in all of these regimes, the power of actors outside the electoral process generates a distinct set of dynamics and challenges not found under competitive authoritarianism' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 32).

[4] The Maghreb has long been considered a special region. Located at the geo-cultural intersection between Africa, the Middle East and Europe, its countries (Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya) are bound by commonalities that distinguish them from everywhere else (Humbaraci 1996, p. 10 and Willis 2012, p. 9). As a result, none of the various African, Asian and European case studies considered in Levitsky and Way's 2010 book completely speak to the Maghreb'

This decision raises two important concerns. First, that they chose their case studies to support their thesis. Second, that by excluding military backed and controlled regimes, they limited their model's claim to universality. For there are numerous countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and elsewhere in which the armed forces are politically influential or dominant. If none of these can be considered, large swathes of the world are potentially placed beyond their model's explanatory power. This paper uses Algeria to demonstrate the falsity of this limit.

The paper is organised along the same lines as each of their original case studies. Accordingly, it assesses the type and strength of Algeria's links to Europe and North America, the degree of leverage Washington, London, Paris and Brussels have over Algiers, and the strength of the Bouteflika regime's organisational power. It then moves on to trace the origins and development of the Algerian regime. In fact, the paper's only structural innovation is a short section at the start defining the dimensions of linkage, leverage and organisational power.

2. An overview of linkage, leverage and organisational power

In 2010 Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way published their celebrated and highly influential book, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*.[5] Its premise was that the end of the Cold War triggered a sharp decline in international tolerance of authoritarian practices and the regimes that employed them. Confronted by this new, far less sympathetic international environment, many of these regimes, but by no means all, were forced to change. Some, like Poland and Estonia, did so fundamentally to become fully functioning democracies. Yet others did so only partially. They adopted some or more of the trappings of democracy but fell short of becoming fully democratic. In these countries, 'electoral manipulation, unfair media access, abuse of state resources, and varying degrees of harassment and violence skewed the playing field in favour of the incumbents' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 3).

Levitsky and Way describe such regimes as competitive authoritarian, and spend the remainder of their book developing and testing a model that can explain why some of them 'democratized during the post-Cold War period, while others remained stable and authoritarian and still others experienced turnover without democratization' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 5). Their model emphasises the importance of international relations but still places significant

[5] For more on the reception of this work, please see the introduction to this special issue.

weight on domestic factors, most notably, a regime's willingness and ability to defend itself. More specifically, they argue that a regime's readiness to democratise and the extent to which it does so are heavily influenced by the strength of its relations with the United States and European Union. Both are considered paragons and active proponents of democracy.

Levitsky and Way argue that relations with the US and EU take two main forms: linkage and leverage. Linkage relates to the 'density of ties (economic, political, diplomatic, social, and organizational) and cross-border flows (of capital, goods and services, people, and information) among particular countries and the United States, the EU …, and Western-dominated multilateral institutions' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 43). Leverage, on the other hand, 'encompasses both … regimes' bargaining power vis-à-vis the West, or their ability to avoid Western action aimed at punishing abuse or encouraging political liberalization; and … the potential impact (in terms of economic health or security) of Western punitive action toward target states' (Levitsky and Way 2010, pp. 40-41).

A regime's capacity to withstand any such pressure is also affected by three other considerations. The first is the size and strength of its economy. The smaller and weaker it is, the less able a regime is to resist any pressure placed upon it. The second is the extent to which the United States and European Union coordinate their foreign policies and the consistency with which they pursue them. The more US and EU objectives are synchronised and rigorously pursed, the greater the pressure on a regime. And the third is the level of assistance provided by a black knight or counter-hegemonic power. The more economic, military and/or diplomatic support such a power furnishes, the more a regime is able to withstand any pressure put upon it (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 41). Levitsky and Way grade Western linkages to and leverage over regimes high, medium and low. When linkage is high democratisation is more likely even if leverage is low. But when linkage is lower 'regime outcomes are driven largely by domestic factors' (Levitsky and Way 2010, pp. 70-71).

The most decisive of these domestic factors is the organisational power of a regime. For Levitsky and Way, organisational power has two key elements: the state and the party. If these are effective a regime is well placed 'to prevent elite defection, co-opt or repress opponents, defuse or crack down on protest[s], and win (or steal) elections' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 56). Moreover, it is better able to withstand even 'vigorous opposition challenges' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 56). But if the state and party are ineffective a regime is vulnerable to 'relatively weak opposition movements' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 56). By extension,

therefore, if external leverage is high a regime with low organisational power is susceptible to 'weak opposition challenges' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 71). But if outside leverage is low even a regime lacking in organisational power is 'likely to survive, for they will encounter limited external democratizing pressure' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 71).

3. Linkage, leverage and organisational power

The purpose of this section is to apply Levitsky and Way's model to Algeria. It does so by using the three dimensions and each of their respective sub-dimensions to frame and structure its analysis. That is, it focuses on events and actors relevant to the dimension and sub-dimensions in question. In this way, the section makes a comprehensive and evidenced assessment of the strength of Algeria's links to Europe and North America, the West's leverage over Algiers, and the Bouteflika regime's organisational capacity.

3.1 Linkage

Algeria has medium links to European and North American countries. The links between countries take a range of forms. Levitsky and Way organise these connections into six categories: economic ('flows of trade investment, and credit'); intergovernmental ('including bilateral diplomatic and military ties as well as participation in Western-led alliances, treaties, and international organisations'); technocratic ('the share of a country's elite that is educated in the West and/or has professional ties to Western universities or Western-led multilateral institutions'); social ('flows of people across borders, including terrorism, immigration and refugee flows, and diaspora networks'); information ('flows of information across borders via telecommunications, Internet connections, and Western media penetration'); and civil society ('local ties to Western-based NGOs, international religious and party organisations, and other transnational networks') (Levitsky and Way 2010, pp. 43-44).[6]

[6] There is an apparent inconsistency in *Competitive Authoritarianism* over the number of categories of links. In the subsection entitled Linkage to the West, Levitsky and Way identify six groupings: economic, intergovernmental, technocratic, social, information and civil society (Levitsky and Way 2010, pp. 43-44). Yet in Appendix III: Measuring Linkage, they identify only four categories: economic, social, communication and intergovernmental (Levitsky and Way 2010, pp. 374-375). Based on what they include, the information and communication groupings are broadly the same. This paper considers the six categories of links so as to cover the greater breadth of connections.

The strength of a country's linkage to Europe and North America is determined by the number and quality of connections between them. Algeria's economic ties to the West have grown stronger over the past 30 years. The forging of these closer bonds was initially triggered by the collapse of international oil and gas prices in the mid-1980s. Between 1985 and 1986 oil prices fell by around 60%, from US$30 per barrel to just US$10 (Ruedy 2005, p. 245). This led to a similarly drastic drop in Algeria's foreign currency earnings and income as the value of its oil exports plummeted from US$47 to US$21 billion (Joffé 2002, p. 38). With its revenue much reduced and an increasing amount of what it did earn spent on repaying the country's spiralling debts (Dillman 1998, p. 3, pp. 13-14), the Algerian government was forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank for emergency support (Lowi 2009, p. 140; Dillman 1998, pp. 13-14).

Under the IMF and World Bank's guidance – first to qualify to receive loans and later in accordance with the loan agreements it signed – the Algerian government greatly scaled back its public spending, with far-reaching social and political consequences. It then set about liberalising its economy, which included placing some state-owned industries up for sale and inviting private and foreign investment in others (Meliani, Aghrout and Ammari 2004, p. 94). As a result, private and overseas investment in the economy has grown steadily over the past 20 years, leading to the establishment of significant links between Algiers and selected foreign companies and their governments (Witton 2010).

The West's willingness to work with Algiers has been further enhanced by the country's vital contribution to the global energy markets, and roles in both combatting *Al Qaeda* and promoting regional security. By 2005, the six largest consumers of Algeria's gas were Italy, Spain, France, Turkey, Portugal and the United States (Le Sueur 2010, p. 108). And for the past 25 years, its security forces have been fighting against a range of Islamist terror groups targeting Europe and North America (Le Sueur 2010, pp. 146-150). These groups also threaten Algeria's immediate neighbours, some of whom are ill equipped to deal with the danger. The size, experience and proven competence of Algeria's security forces, therefore, make it an essential regional partner.

The presence of large Algerian diaspora communities in their countries are also prompting western governments to work more closely with Algiers (Silverstein 2004). The World Bank (2011, p. 1) estimated that in 2010 around 3.4% of the total Algerian population lived abroad. Economically, the remittances the diaspora sends back to Algeria are worth

billions of dollars and help support thousands of families.[7] Politically, many of them retain the right to vote in Algerian elections, and eight seats are currently reserved for their representatives in the Algerian parliament. The security dimension is also important, as European governments worry about terrorist infiltration of these communities. One of the main reasons *Al Qaeda* entered into an alliance with the *Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat* (Groupe Salafiste pour Prédication et le Combat, GSPC) in January 2007 was to gain access to its European sources of funding as well as its networks of members and supporters (Le Sueur 2010, p. 156).

Inevitably the existence of this large, extensive population means that numerous well-developed civil society links connect Algeria and countries with significant Algerian diaspora communities. French and European groups in particular, some set up expressly to support and represent this trans-national populace, feature prominently on both sides of the Mediterranean (Silverstein 2004, p. 227). And the flow of ideas and information they encourage and enable is facilitated by modern technology. Cheap mobile telephones and satellite televisions, and easy access to email and social media allow ordinary Algerians – especially those residing in the coastal towns and cities, where the majority live – to remain fully informed about what is happening in the rest of the world and, more crucially, gain access to additional information about and alternative interpretations of events in Algeria.

3.2 Leverage

European and North American governments have low leverage over their Algerian counterpart even though economic, intergovernmental, social, information and civil society ties between their respective countries have grown in number and strength over the past 30 years. According to Levitsky and Way, a regime's ability to withstand outside pressure (to the extent that it falls within the low leverage category) is determined by any one of three criteria: if it has a large economy (with a total GDP greater than US$100 billion); is a major oil producer (extracting more than one million barrels of oil per day in an average year); or possesses or has access to nuclear weapons (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 372). Algeria currently conforms to two of these criteria. The World Bank calculated the size of Algeria's economy in 2013 to be US$210.2 billion (World Bank 2014, p. 1). And the US Energy Information Administration (EIA)

[7] The World Bank (2011, p. 1) values the money transfers made in 2010, at slightly over US$2 billion.

estimated the country's total average oil production in 2013 to be 1.8 million barrels per day (EIA 2014, p. 6).

Indeed, oil and gas are key enablers of the Algerian regime. The size of the country's proven reserves (12.2 billion barrels of oil and 159 trillion cubic feet of gas) (EIA 2014, p. 5, 10) and the possibility of further significant discoveries (two-thirds of Algeria's vast territory have yet to be properly explored) (EIA 2014, p. 5) mean that the country is well endowed with these valuable and strategically important resources. Indeed, the large size of these reserves (Algeria is Africa's highest gas and third highest oil producer) (EIA 2014, p. 1) makes the country a crucial energy provider. And its significance as such has only grown over the past 15 years because of ongoing instability in other key oil and gas producing regions and the Russian government's attempts to use its gas reserves to put political pressure on Europe.

Drawing on Michael Ross's (2001) definition of the resource curse,[8] Algeria's oil and gas sales have undermined democracy and strengthened authoritarianism in three key ways. First, they have had a rentier effect that occurs when 'governments use their oil revenues to relieve social pressures that might otherwise lead to demands for greater accountability' (Ross 2001, p. 332).[9] Second, they have had a repression effect that occurs when 'governments spend more on internal security' to 'block the population's democratic aspirations' (Ross 2001, p. 335). And third, they have had a modernisation effect whereby, as a result of the economic path the country is set on due to its heavy reliance on its oil sector, 'cultural and social changes' (Ross 2001, p. 336) often critical to democratisation simply do not occur.

Algeria has exhibited all three effects. To begin with, it is a rentier state as it 'derive[s] a large fraction of … [its] revenue[] from external rents' and 'workers' remittances … [are] an important source of foreign exchange' (Ross 2001, p. 329). Second, since the early 1990s the military has enjoyed exponential budget increases (which have been paid for by oil money)

[8] As Ross observes, 'many of the poorest and most troubled states in the developing world have, paradoxically, high levels of natural resource wealth' (Ross 2001, p. 328). Moreover, 'states with greater natural resource wealth tend to grow more slowly than their resource-poor counterparts … [and] are … more likely to suffer from civil wars' (Ross 2001, p. 328). To these two components of the resource curse, Ross adds a third, that 'oil and mineral wealth tends to makes states less democratic' (Ross 2001, p. 328).

[9] More specifically, the rentier effect can manifest itself in at least three different forms. It can lead governments to use their revenues 'to tax their populations less heavily or not at all' in order to dampen their demands for 'accountability from – and representation in – their government' (Ross 2001, p. 332); increase spending on patronage, which in turn dampens latent pressures for democratisation' (Ross 2001, p. 338); and 'prevent the formation of social groups that are independent of the state and … may be inclined to demand greater political rights' (Ross 2001, p. 335).

and has consistently acted to curb Algerians' democratic rights.[10] And third, all previous attempts to diversify Algeria's economy have failed to develop any non-hydrocarbon sector to the same level as the oil and gas sectors.[11]

European and North American governments' leverage over their Algerian counterpart is further undermined by their competing foreign policy objectives for the country. The most significant tension lies not between Paris and Brussels, Madrid and Rome, London and Washington, which all broadly want the same things, but between two of the main strands common to each of their policies. The first of these is a desire to see democracy strengthened and civil and human rights better protected. All of these governments would like Algiers to be more democratic and respectful of its citizens' liberties. And the second is a desire for greater political stability, secure access to the country's oil and gas supplies, and the effective containment of the Islamist terror threat (Zoubir 2004, pp. 176-179).

This tension has long shaped Europe's and North America's dealings with the Maghreb, especially since the attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon on 11 September 2001.[12] As a result, the EU has consistently failed to rigorously pursue the lofty ambitions set down in its various North Africa strategies.[13] Indeed, it has been all too willing to reach compromises with the region's various authoritarian regimes (Dennison 2013, p. 119). This much has been acknowledged by both the European Commission and the European Council in their latest strategy, the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity (PfDSP), launched on 8 March 2011 (Echagüe, Michou and Mikail 2011, pp. 329-330). The PfDSP departs from earlier strategies, most notably the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), by privileging popular demands for greater political rights and freedoms, and advocating the use of positive rather than negative conditionality to promote democracy in the region (Teti 2012, p. 267, 272).

Despite these changes, Europe's dealings with the Maghreb are still marked by inconsistency. Some of the key mechanisms with which the EU proposes to promote democracy are either under-developed or continue to under-perform (Dennison 2013, p. 120).

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[10] By 2009 Algeria's defence spending was not only the highest in Africa but was also seven times greater than what it had been in 1992 (Perlo-Freeman 2012, p. 203).

[11] The most notable attempt to diversify Algeria's economy was the programme of industrialising industries pursued by President Boumedienne in the 1970s (Bennoune 1988, p. 121).

[12] The restrictions President Clinton had imposed on the sale of certain weapons and other military equipment to Algiers' in response to its questionable human rights record were quietly lifted in the wake of the terror attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon (Le Sueur 2010, p. 106; Evans and Phillips 2007, p. 255).

[13] The EU's earlier strategies include the Mediterranean Partnership (1995), the European Neighbourhood Policy (2004), and the Union for the Mediterranean (2008) (Echagüe, Michou and Mikail 2011, p. 330).

And many EU states still pursue agendas that run counter to the one set down in the PfDSP and in ways that are at odds with those advocated by the EU (Echagüe, Michou and Mikail 2011, pp. 331-334). Their actions and importance to Algiers 'as energy clients, security partners and exporters of defence equipment and training' (Dennison 2013, p. 123) inevitably undermine the EU's own message and efforts. As a result, relations between European and North American governments and their Algerian counterpart remain dominated by energy and security concerns (Dennison 2013, p. 123).

Finally, Algeria does not have a black knight patron. Levitsky and Way define a black knight as a high-income country (per capita GDP of US$10,000 or more) or major military power (with an annual defence budget of more than US$10 billion) (Levitsky and Way 2010, pp. 372-372) that provides substantial bilateral aid amounting to at least 1% of the recipient's total GDP. Black knights are usually extra-European and North American powers although France has, on occasion, played this role (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 41). In providing this aid, a black knight helps inure a regime against other outside influences. No country currently provides Algeria with sufficient bilateral aid to qualify as its black knight. France, for instance, one of the largest aid investors in the country, has committed €217.2 million of aid since 2000, far less than Levitsky and Way's 1% annual threshold (Agence Française de Développement 2014, p. 1).

3.3 Organisational power

The Algerian regime has high organisational power because of its discretionary control of the country's economy, medium party strength and, most crucially, high coercive capacity. According to Levitsky and Way, a regime's coercive capabilities can be classified high if it possesses a 'large, well-trained, and well-equipped security apparatus with an effective presence across the national territory … [including] specialised intelligence or internal security agencies with demonstrated capacity to penetrate civil society and monitor and repress opposition activities at the village and/or neighbourhood level across the country' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 376).

Algeria has long had a large and politically influential military. The armed forces' current privileged position is mainly the result of the various counterinsurgency and counterterrorism measures introduced by successive governments from the early 1990s

onwards.[14] Initially, Algeria's military was ill-equipped to fight a counterinsurgency campaign. Yet from the mid-1990s onwards, it gradually gained the upper hand. Specialist units were either established or expanded (Lowi 2005, p. 234). New weapons and equipment were procured. Training and doctrine were adapted and improved. Local militia forces were raised to guard isolated settlements (Lowi 2005, p. 235) and free up regular army units to pursue insurgents (Martinez 2004, p. 21). And by ruthless means, the country's political and military leaders gained a more complete and improved intelligence picture of the insurgency (Evans 2007, p. 254).

These reforms have left Algeria with a large, well-funded, well-equipped, battle-hardened and politically influential military. Moreover, the presence of a small but committed rump of fighters with excellent links to *Al Qaeda* continues to furnish the regime with a compelling reason why it needs to maintain these forces at their current high level. Just as crucial, however, has been President Bouteflika's determination to keep them onside. In December 2010, his government announced it was giving most of the country's 170,000 police officers a 50% pay rise that would be backdated three years. And 12 months later, it announced a similarly generous deal for members of the armed forces raising some salaries by as much as 40% and backdating all increases by three years again (Volpi 2013, p. 111).

Less vital to the regime's organisational power is party strength. From independence until the autumn of 1989, the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale, FLN) was Algeria's only legal party. And for much of that period, certainly from the late 1960s onwards, its strength was high. According to Levitsky and Way, a party's strength is determined by both scope and cohesion. A high scope party is a 'mass organisation that penetrates virtually all population centres down to village and neighbourhood level and/or civil society and/or workplace … [and engages in] significant grassroots activity – during and between elections – across the national territory' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 377). And a high cohesion party is a 'single governing party that achieved power via violent conflict, including revolution or national liberation struggle in which much of the current leadership participated' (Levitsky and Way 2010, p. 377).

For nearly 30 years, the FLN had high scope and high cohesion. It had launched the war of liberation and steadily confirmed its leadership of the anti-colonial campaign by either

[14] The Islamist insurgency which gripped the country throughout this period grew rapidly from 2,000 fighters in 1992 to 27,000 in 1994 (Lowi 2005, p. 232).

eliminating or incorporating other nationalist groups (Le Sueur 2005, p. 186; Evans 2012, p. 217). All of the country's post-independence presidents, including those who have held office since 1989, have been members of the FLN, and two, Ben Bella and Mohamed Boudiaf, were among its founding fathers.[15] Indeed, it was the scale of the FLN's penetration of society, its familiarity to most Algerians, and unique and celebrated role in leading the country to independence that convinced President Benjedid that it would win the local, regional and parliamentary elections he ordered to be held in June 1990 and December 1991.

Yet since 1989, party strength has been medium. Again based on scope and cohesion, Levitsky and Way define a medium strength party as one that 'does not meet the criteria for high scope but possesses a national organisation that penetrates most population centres and is capable of carrying out election campaigns and fielding candidates across the national territory,' and which is either 'an established party … that does not meet the criteria for high cohesion,' or a 'new party ([which] has participated in fewer than two national elections) with evidence of shared ideology or ethnicity in a context in which that ideological or ethnic cleavage is predominant' (Levitsky and Way 2010, pp. 377-378).

None of the parties in Algeria today enjoy the advantages that the FLN once did. The FLN today is a national organisation and the inheritor of this celebrated name (as well as much of the baggage associated with it). The National Rally for Democracy (Rassemblement National Démocratique, RND) is also a national party but lacks deep roots as it has always been an establishment party, a top-down creation founded in February 1997 as a vehicle for President Zéroual and then President Bouteflika.[16] Indeed, Zéroual was its first secretary general and was succeeded by Ahmed Ouyahia, his one-time prime minister who served two more terms as premier under Bouteflika. Yet between them the FLN and RND offer the regime considerable reach. In the 2012 parliamentary election the FLN came first, winning 208 (out of 462) seats, and the RND second, winning 68 seats (Evans 2012a, p. 1).

Finally, the regime exercises significant control over Algeria's economy. According to Levitsky and Way, such discretionary influence can manifest itself either through the existence of a 'state-controlled mineral sector [that] accounts for more than 50 percent of export revenue' or a 'centrally planned economy that does not undergo large-scale privatisation' (Levitsky and

[15] The FLN was established in 1954 by nine men: Hocine Ait Ahmed, Ahmed Ben Bella, Larbi Ben M'Hidi, Mustapha Ben Boulaid, Mohamed Boudiaf, Rabah Bitat, Mourad Didouche, Mohamed Khider and Belkacem Krim (Ottaway and Ottaway 1970, p. 14n).
[16] Bouteflika stood as both the FLN and RND's candidate in the 2004 and 2009 presidential elections.

Way 2010, p. 378). The Bouteflika regime, like all its post-independence predecessors, is able to influence and shape the economy by both means. SONATRACH, the state operated hydrocarbon company, owns around 80% of all oil and gas produced in Algeria (EIA 2014, p. 4), while hydrocarbon sales abroad generate around 95% of the country's total export earnings (EIA 2014, p. 1).

From independence until the early 1980s, successive governments pursued explicitly socialist economic programmes that privileged central economic planning. Then with gathering speed from the early 1980s onwards, the regime pursued liberalisation and sought greater private and overseas investment. Yet despite these measures, the state remains a major economic actor because of its control over the crucial hydrocarbon sectors that generate around 60% of its total income (EIA 2014, p. 1). Moreover, in recent years, as the country's debt service ratio has fallen to more manageable levels owing to the record high international oil and gas prices, President Bouteflika has strengthened national control of the economy, passing legislation in 2009 requiring all companies to be at least 51% Algerian-owned (U.S. Department of State 2013, p. 1).

4. Origins and development of the regime

The purpose of this section is to chart Algeria's transformation into a competitive authoritarian regime. From 1989 to 1992 Algeria had a multi-party system in which the best advantaged party, the FLN, repeatedly lost out to its rivals.[17] Then from January 1992 to November 1995, Algeria was an authoritarian regime as no presidential or parliamentary elections were held. And since November 1995, Algeria has been a competitive authoritarian regime as Presidents Zéroual and Bouteflika have allowed multi-party elections to take place for all levels of government but have ensured that regime-backed candidates and parties enjoy significant advantages over their rivals.

More specifically, Algeria's transformation has encompassed three main parts. The first has entailed the careful screening of participants. Those standing for election, and especially presidential candidates, are subjected to the closest scrutiny both in accordance with electoral

[17] In the local and regional elections held on 12 June 1990, the FLN retained control of just 487 municipal and 14 *wilaya* councils compared to the 853 and 32 taken by the FIS (Hill 2009, p. 135). Then in the parliamentary election held on 26 December 1991 it retained just 15 seats compared to the 188 won by the FIS and 25 taken by the Socialist Forces Front (Front des Forces Socialistes, FFS) (Hill 2009, p. 137).

law and beyond it. Mahfoud Nahnah, the veteran leader of the Movement for a Peaceful Society (Mouvement pour la Société de la Paix, MSP), was prevented from entering the 1999 presidential election because he could not provide evidence of having fought in the war of liberation. This remains the only occasion such a qualification has been enforced. And Ali Benflis, Bouteflika's former prime minister and secretary general of the FLN, was impeded in the 2004 presidential election when Bouteflika used the courts to delay and dilute his nomination by the FLN as its official candidate.[18]

This does not mean that genuine opponents are never allowed to participate. Nahnah ran in the 1995 presidential election and won around 25% of the vote (it was this success that almost certainly led to his being excluded from the 1999 election). Said Sadi, the long-time leader of the Rally for Culture and Democracy (Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie, RCD) took part in the 1995 and 2004 elections (but boycotted the 1999 and 2009 votes). And Louisa Hanoune, leader of the Workers' Party (Parti des Travailleurs, PT) participated in the 2004, 2009 and 2014 elections. It is now established practice for the rules to be changed on an *ad hoc,* election-by-election basis to ensure the regime's preferred candidate wins.

Political parties are also closely controlled. The Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique du Salut, FIS) is still outlawed despite repeated calls from opposition groups and leaders for its re-legalisation.[19] The Movement for an Islamic Society (Al-Harakat li-Mujtama` Islamimi, HAMAS) and Islamic Renaissance Movement (Mouvement de la Nahda Islamique, MNI) have both been forced to change their names – to the Movement for a Peaceful Society and the Renaissance Movement (Mouvement de la Nahda, MN) respectively – to comply with article 42 of the 1996 constitution that forbids parties from appealing exclusively to specific religious, linguistic or racial communities (République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire 1996, Article 42).[20] And both Zéroual and Bouteflika have allowed and encouraged the

[18] Benflis did eventually stand in the election as a FLN candidate. But as a result of Bouteflika's actions, the FLN split with part of it nominating Benflis and part of it Bouteflika (Layachi 2014, p. 146n).

[19] A high point in this pressure was the publication of the so-called Sant'Egidio Platform on 13 January 1995. The Platform was the outcome of a series of meetings between the leaders of the main opposition parties (FLN, FFS, MSP, PT and the Movement for Democracy in Algeria (Mouvement pour la Démocratie en Algérie, MDA) and those senior FIS figures not in prison at the Sant'Egidio religious community in Rome. As well as calling for the separation of powers, the re-establishment of a multi-party system, Tamazight to be given equal status with Arabic, and the government to foreswear the use of violence for political purposes, it also demanded that the ban on the FIS be lifted. Even though many of its objectives matched his own, President Zéroual summarily rejected the Platform because he saw it as a threat to his authority (Le Sueur 2010, pp. 66-67).

[20] This had been a provision of the 1989 constitution as well, but had not been enforced.

establishment of new parties which, by participating in political life, have helped to legitimise the parameters set by Zéroual and Bouteflika. Moreover, the higher the number of parties the greater the chance the opposition vote will be split and thus the easier it becomes for Bouteflika and other regime politicians to be (re)elected.

The second part of Zéroual and Bouteflika's rehabilitation process has entailed aiding and abetting their preferred candidates and parties. In the run-up to the 2009 presidential election, Bouteflika, and the RND and FLN were advantaged in several significant ways. First, Bouteflika began campaigning earlier than he was permitted to (Freedom House 2011, p. 20). Second, his campaign was given not only more coverage but also more favourable coverage by the media than those of his rivals. The Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Driots de l'Homme, LADDH) calculated that 88.5% of television and radio, and 27.6% of press coverage of the election focused sympathetically on him (Freedom House 2011, p. 20). Third, and in violation of electoral law, Bouteflika promised lucrative public contracts to private businessmen in return for their financial backing, making his campaign by far the best funded (Freedom House 2011, p. 20).

The third and final part of the rehabilitation process has been the manipulation of the votes themselves. Under Zéroual and Bouteflika, Algeria has had five presidential (1995, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014) and four parliamentary elections (1997, 2002, 2007 and 2012), and three national referendums (1996, 1999 and 2005).[21] Some of these elections have been freer and fairer than others. The 1995 presidential and 2012 parliamentary ballots were two of the fairest. The 1997 parliamentary election was less fair, leading several opposition parties to file complaints with the Constitutional Council. And election monitors and opposition parties raised serious concerns about the conduct of the 1999, 2004 and 2009 presidential, and the 2002 and 2007 parliamentary elections. Indeed, so extensive was the malpractice witnessed by the EU, US, OSCE and UN during the 1999 and 2004 presidential elections that they all refused to send any observers to oversee the 2009 vote (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2009, p. 1),[22] which was also marked by widespread allegations of ballot box stuffing and

[21] The 1996 referendum was to approve a new national constitution (passed), the 1999 referendum to approve an amnesty for Islamist insurgents (Law of Civil Concord, passed), and the 2005 referendum to approve a second amnesty (Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, passed).

[22] Nevertheless the outcome of the 2009 election, which was widely questioned by both domestic monitors and opposition parties, was still accepted by Paris, Brussels, London and Washington. Of course concerns were raised and hopes for greater rigour and transparency in the future were voiced. But such doubts were made *sotto voce* and were not considered sufficiently serious to prevent either President Hollande or Prime Minister Cameron from paying historic and highly symbolic visits later on.

thefts, repeat voting, and other irregularities (Freedom House 2011, p. 19). The conduct of the most recent 2014 presidential election has also been widely condemned by opposition parties and the defeated candidate, Ali Benflis (Aljazeera 2014, p. 1).

These iniquities undoubtedly helped fuel the various protests that were staged in Algiers and other towns and cities from December 2010 through to January 2012, and sporadically throughout 2013. The Algerian opposition bears noteworthy similarities to both its successful counterparts in Tunisia and Libya, and its less effective equivalent in Morocco, but is different from them all in at least one crucial respect. All of the region's protest movements sprang from surprising sources, as none of them were initially built around or led by an established opposition party (to the extent that such bodies were allowed to exist and operate in their respective political systems). Rather, these movements were more spontaneous coalescences of civil society groups. Moreover, Islamic organisations featured far less prominently in the early protests than they did in the political settlements forged afterwards.[23]

The protestors in Tunisia have achieved far more dramatic results than their comrades in either Morocco or Algeria and, in so doing, paved the way for yet more fundamental change. Ben Ali's departure and the subsequent outlawing of his party, the Democratic Constitutional Rally (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique, RCD), on 6 February 2011, created an extraordinary political opening in which they can compete. And since then, they have been able to influence the various transitional governments that have assumed power, participate in the prolonged debate over the new constitution and shape the new political order that is being established.[24]

In contrast, the 20 February Movement – the broad coalition that came to lead the pro-democracy protests in Morocco – did not accomplish anything nearly as profound. Ousting the king, the main locus of power in the country, was never a popular or realistic objective. His endurance inevitably meant that the Movement was not presented with the same scale of opportunity as were the protestors in Tunisia. Moreover, the palace responded quickly and adeptly to the demonstrations. On 9 March 2011, just two and half weeks after the Movement was established, the king launched a royal commission to review the constitution and

[23] The Islamist Justice and Development Party (Parti de la Justice et du Développement, PJD) and Ennahda have won legislative elections in Morocco and Tunisia respectively.
[24] The new constitution was overwhelmingly approved by Tunisia's Constituent Assembly on 26 January 2014.

recommend ways in which it could be reformed.[25] The creation of the commission not only enabled the palace to regain control of the debate over the constitution, but also allowed it to marginalise the Movement and re-establish the official opposition parties as the (approved) conveyors of the public's demands and grievances (Dalmasso and Cavatorta 2013, pp. 230-231). Although the 20 February Movement continues to organise protests, it is not nearly as large or threatening to the regime as it once was.

Ostensibly the protests in Algeria followed a similar pattern as those in Morocco. The early, spontaneous demonstrations soon came to be orchestrated and led by a body called the National Co-ordination for Change and Democracy (Coordination Nationale pour le Changement et la Démocratie, CNCD), an umbrella organisation comprised of a range of opposition political parties and civil society groups. And just as King Mohamed did, President Bouteflika responded by quickly undertaking a series of popular and highly symbolic reforms, including lifting the state of emergency that had been in place since January 1992, and promising to review and make changes to the constitution. Unlike in Morocco, however, the gradual decrease in the number of protests, along with the size and intensity of those that continued to be held, was not due primarily to the government's skilful appropriation of the demonstrators' agenda. Rather, it was because of popular trepidation born of recent, painful experience.

Indeed, from the moment the protests began, parallels with the Black October riots of 1988 were drawn in the press and elsewhere (Volpi 2013, p. 107). While these comparisons provided the security forces with a timely reminder to be on their best behaviour, they also drew attention to the deaths, disappearances, injuries, and suffering of the previous 20 years. During this period around 150,000 people were killed (Martinez 2004, p. 15) and thousands more simply vanished (Le Sueur 2005, p. 320). Arbitrary detentions, torture and summary executions were frequent. It was against this historic backdrop, therefore, that the Maghreb Spring protests took place in Algeria.

5. Conclusion

[25] The new constitution was approved by referendum on 1 July 2011.

Algeria is a case of medium linkage, low leverage and high organisational power that together help explain the durability of competitive authoritarianism there. As such, it bears out Levitsky and Way's thesis on the importance of linkage and leverage, and leverage and organisational power. Algeria's medium linkage means that its political development is driven by domestic factors. And the regime's high organisational power means that it is well placed to withstand both opposition challenges and any pressure placed upon it by the EU and US. The regime's build-up and maintenance of its high coercive capacity has been greatly facilitated by the large revenues it has earned from its oil and gas sectors. And what pressure has been exerted by the West since the start of the Maghreb Spring has been compromised by the United States' and Europe's haphazard coordination of their foreign policy goals, and the pursuit of incompatible and competing objectives by the EU and individual European governments.

The paper makes three important and original contributions. It is the first to use Levitsky and Way's dimensions of linkage, leverage and organisational power to structure an analysis of Algeria's recent political development. In so doing, it draws attention to the country's changed and changing relationship with Europe and North America. This relationship and Algeria's ability to neutralise, offset and withstand at least some of the democratising pressure placed upon it by Paris, Brussels, London and Washington is critical to explaining its evolution into a competitive authoritarian regime. Second, the paper extends Levitsky and Way's concepts to a country to which they have never before been applied and to a regime type (one in which the military holds tutelary power) that they purposely excluded from their choice of case studies in their 2010 book. The paper rejects the original limitation they impose by demonstrating the applicability of their dimensions to Algeria and other similar countries.

Third, the paper helps counteract the deficit of studies into Algeria over the past few years by explaining why Bouteflika's regime has endured while those of Ben Ali and Gadhafi have not. The critical difference between these regimes has been Bouteflika's high organisational power and ability to retain sufficient control over Algeria's large and effective military. Unlike its Algerian counterpart, the Tunisian army did not play nearly as prominent a role in securing independence. As a result, it has never commanded the same degree of political influence and popular prestige. Moreover, both Presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali took care to exclude its officers from political life (Joffé 2011, p. 519). So when mass demonstrations broke out in many of the country's major towns and cities in late December 2011 and early January 2012, it refused to fire on the protestors as it had no great vested interest in preserving the

regime. The burden of defending the government fell instead to the police and security services, which were quickly overwhelmed by the task (Joffé 2011, p. 519).

Relations between Gadhafi and the Libyan armed forces were even more strained. As the leader of the small group of army officers who ousted King Idris from power in 1969, Gadhafi understood only too well the military's importance to his regime's survival. To stop it doing to him what he had done to his predecessor, he placed strict limits on the activities in which its members could engage (Joffé 2011, p. 522). And to dilute its influence still further and offer him an alternative source of coercive power, he established a militia made up of Tuareg tribesmen from northern Mali. The suspicion and, at times, barely concealed contempt with which he treated his military, especially after its humiliating defeat by Chad's forces in 1987 (Joffé 2011, p. 522), ensured that many of its officers felt little loyalty towards him. This much was confirmed by the number of units that quickly sided with the rebels once the civil war began in February 2011. And the regime suffered further catastrophic desertions in July that year when around 3,000 Tuareg fighters quit Libya for northern Mali, taking all of their weapons, equipment and vehicles with them (Zoubir 2012, p. 454; Lounnas 2013, pp. 328-329). Inevitably, these defections greatly impaired the regime's ability to defend itself.

Finally, as well as possessing the means to survive, the Algerian regime also boasts the know-how and determination. The country continues to be governed by men (and a few women) who fought in the war of liberation. The wealth of experience this gave them for grinding out results has been added to by the long and ongoing struggle against the Islamist insurgents and terrorists. The importance of this experience is highlighted by Way (2011, p. 20), who observes that 'the existence or absence of a recent revolutionary struggle largely explains which communist regimes survived in 1989 and which did not. The ones that outlasted the end of the Cold War – China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, Vietnam – were all led by veterans of revolutionary struggles'. Unlike the leaders of any other Maghreb country, Algerian leaders have successfully resisted two committed and capable foes. Thus they are well versed in doing what is necessary to ensure political survival.

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